Rural Revitalization - Helping Sunken County Tourism Project Development Planning

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Abstract: *This study aims to leverage new media marketing to promote and capitalize on Sunken County's tourist attractions' unique characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. By identifying and understanding visitor groups through profiling and interpretation, the study intends to lay the groundwork for the initial development and creation of Sunken County's intellectual property (IP) to attract tourists. To transform tourists into passionate supporters, the study aims to utilize positive tourist experiences to improve and further explore tourism projects within Sunken County. By capitalizing on the natural flow of tourists, the study aspires to enhance the secondary discovery of attractions in Sunken County while also diverting attention toward snow and ice projects. This, in turn, will create a replicable "S-I-L-E" model designed to maximize people's enthusiasm and generate spontaneous interest in other local specialties. Ultimately, this model aims to foster a virtuous circle, driving rural economic development and bridging the gap between urban and rural economies in the near future.*

Keywords: *Travel sight; Rural revitalization; Project development*

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving new media landscape, the development and promotion of tourism projects face both opportunities and challenges. Many rural towns rely on distinctive local characteristics and effective tourism development planning to drive local economic growth.[1] This study focuses on planning and exploring Northeast China's ice and snow tourism projects, considering successful cases and the current situation. However, it is important to note that the popularity of ice and snow tourism in the Northeast remains concentrated in a few well-known attractions, resulting in a relatively decentralized layout. The creation of a cohesive ice and snow cultural and industrial belt has yet to be fully realized. While attractions such as Ice World, Arctic Village, and Mohe enjoy widespread recognition, numerous smaller, lesser-known towns in the Northeast boast breathtaking snowscapes. With their lower development levels, these towns provide visitors with a more affordable and authentic snow experience. To fully unleash the potential of Northeast China's ice and snow tourism, it is essential to increase the visibility and accessibility of these lesser-known towns. By showcasing their unique snowy landscapes and enhancing the overall tourism experience, these towns can attract broader attention and contribute to the sustainable development of the region's ice and snow tourism industry.

2. Market analysis based on the Northeast Ice and Snow Culture Program

2.1. Market pain

Firstly, there is insufficient travel time. The past two years of the pandemic have provided office workers and students with ample time to travel. However, due to pandemic restrictions and other factors, people could not travel during that period. Although the impact of the epidemic is now less significant, heavy workloads and school responsibilities hinder people from going on trips. With vacations becoming shorter and shorter, "Special Forces Travel," where people make the most of limited time, is becoming increasingly popular.

Secondly, tourist attractions often have high consumption, inconsistent product quality, and a subpar visitor experience. Many popular attractions have seen inflated prices for items like water, food, and crafts, exceeding the regular market prices. Additionally, ticket prices are rising, resulting in increased costs for travelers. As a result, "poor travel" has become a trending topic of discussion.

Thirdly, popular attractions are overcrowded with tourists, resulting in a poor travel experience. During this year's May Day holiday, popular tourist destinations experienced long queues, and visitors typically had to spend three to four hours waiting to enter the attractions. Once inside, trampling and overcrowding became serious issues, greatly diminishing people's overall travel experience.

2.2. Consumer survey

Based on the data, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Beijing, Hubei, Zhejiang, Xinjiang, Sichuan, Liaoning, Hebei, and Guangdong emerged as popular provinces for snow and ice tourism during the 2021-2022 snow and ice season. Driven by the "300 million people participating in ice and snow sports" initiative and the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games, domestic ice and snow tourism continues to flourish.

The Harbin Ice Lantern Parade, known as the birthplace of China's ice lantern art, serves as a captivating symbol of ice and snow culture in Harbin. It has become a highly sought-after attraction for national tourists during winter. Jilin's Chagan Lake winter fishing is steeped in historical significance. This traditional practice involves sacrificial lake rituals, net casting, and chiseling through the ice surface. These activities culminate in the impressive capture of tens of thousands of pounds of fresh fish. This unique experience showcases the rich national characteristics and is a must-visit for ice and snow tourism enthusiasts.

Notably, Zhejiang offers more than just the famous West Lake in Hangzhou. It provides attractions such as the "Broken Bridge Snow," An Daming Mountain Ski Resort, Anji Jiangnan Tiandi Ski Resort, and Shaoxing Qiaobo Snow World. Moreover, Zhejiang attracts parents and children with its hot springs lodging, picturesque cabin architecture, ancient townscapes, and other scenic spots, providing a perfect destination for enjoying the tranquil winter environment and a slower-paced lifestyle in the mountains and waters.[2]

2.2.1. Age composition

The field survey in Heilongjiang Province revealed that young and middle-aged people constitute the primary consumer group for ice and snow sports tourism. However, there are relatively few consumers over 50 in this demographic. The region's ice and snow sports tourism projects primarily revolve around activities such as alpine skiing and ice amusement, which are adventurous and thrilling. These activities are more suitable and greatly favored by young and middle-aged individuals, particularly the youth. Moreover, Heilongjiang experiences low winter temperatures, creating a cold environment limiting travel options, especially for the elderly. The extreme weather conditions may pose challenges and discomfort, making it less favorable for older individuals to engage in ice and snow sports tourism.

2.2.2. Gender composition

Currently, skiing remains the predominant activity in Heilongjiang Province's ice and snow sports tourism, with a participant population predominantly composed of men. As a result, there is a higher proportion of male consumers than female consumers in the ice and snow sports tourism domain in Heilongjiang Province.

2.2.3. Geographical composition

According to the research findings, non-local Chinese tourists constitute the highest proportion of consumers who visit Heilongjiang Province for ice and snow sports tourism, followed by residents of Heilongjiang Province. This indicates that non-local Chinese tourists are the province's primary consumers of ice and snow sports tourism. However, it is important to recognize the significant consumer group comprising residents of Heilongjiang Province. Non-local and local tourists contribute to the overall success and development of the region's ice and snow sports tourism.

2.3. Competition

Hemu Village, located in the northernmost part of Xinjiang, offers a unique and pristine northern scenery. The village is adorned with a silvery charm, providing visitors with an authentic experience in the remote northern landscape. Unlike crowded tourist destinations, Hemu Village maintains its tranquility and is free from excessive commercial activity. Surrounded by untouched primeval forests, a visit here allows you to feel the vastness of the earth, connect with the serenity of the outdoors, and truly experience its unique isolation.

Hemu Viewing Platform, located on the outskirts of Hemu Village, provides a breathtaking panoramic

view of the village. Watching the sunrise or sunset from this vantage point is truly awe-inspiring. The sun's rays cast onto the silver snow-covered landscape create a mesmerizing spectacle, profoundly impacting our souls.

For those seeking an ice and snow experience, Hemu Village offers local specialties such as horse-drawn sleigh rides and winter snowmobiling. These activities allow visitors to venture into the endless snowy plains and experience the thrilling collision of speed and passion in the winter wilderness. Additionally, during winter, the village organizes special ethnic games for visitors. Activities like archery, primitive skiing, eagle feeding, and splashing water that freezes into ice allow visitors to engage in unique ethnic sports.

To fully embrace the winter season, Hemu Village features the Hemu Ice & Snow Park. This signature winter attraction offers various programs, including powder snow skiing and multi-person tubing, which are popular among tourists. The park provides a diverse range of ice and snow experiences for visitors. Whether captivated by its natural beauty, seeking adventure in the winter wilderness, or looking to immerse yourself in traditional ethnic activities, Hemu Village offers a one-of-a-kind destination for those yearning for an authentic ice and snow experience.

2.4. SWOT analysis

2.4.1. Strengths Analysis

Sunken County Mistletoe offers a unique and niche travel experience compared to more prominent and famous attractions such as Northeast Mistletoe Island. Since it attracts fewer tourists, you can enjoy a peaceful visit without overcrowding or long queues. The chance to take photos without interruptions and have a high rate of photo-worthy moments adds to the enjoyment of the trip.

The commercialization and level of consumption in Sunken County are relatively low. Visitors often drive to the destination, passing through the scenic Xiaoxingan Mountains and appreciating the natural wonders. Accommodation options in the village are mainly hotels and bed and breakfasts, with an average price of around 150 yuan per person. You can also experience freshly caught fish and shrimp cuisine from the residents. The absence of entrance fees, shopping areas, and compulsory consumption ensures that the travel experience remains affordable and free from price exploitation. This makes it an ideal destination for budget-conscious students and commuters who can easily spend two or three days there by renting a car or chartering a bus.

Sunken County boasts scenic and ecological beauty with low artificial development. The views of the vast blue mirror-like lakes, silver forests created by snow-white freezing fog, and the heavenly atmosphere all provide a visually stunning experience. The freezing fog creates a crystal-clear world, especially during sunrise and sunset, when the sun's rays beautifully interact with the fog. These enchanting scenes often captivate photographers.

Aside from the natural beauty, the unique local customs and interactions with Russian and Oroqen residents make Sunken County a compelling destination. Visitors can stay in European-style wooden houses, join in evening singing and dancing activities, breathe fresh air on the natural prairie filled with cows and sheep, and even experience fishing for fish and shrimp. The proximity to the Russian border also allows for cross-border travel, making it convenient for exploration both within and outside the country.

Overall, the combination of peacefulness, low commercialization, stunning natural landscapes, and cultural experiences make Sunken County Mistletoe an attractive destination for those seeking a unique travel experience away from the more touristy areas.

2.4.2. Disadvantageous Analysis

The tourism projects and infrastructure in Sunken County still need to be completed, and the area's main landscape is characterized by freezing fog. Apart from the surrounding amusement facilities, limited options are available, such as integrated shopping centers, accommodations, and guided tours that contribute to the GDP of local tourism. While the visual experience for visitors may appear satisfactory, the overall recreational experience is significantly diminished in comparison.

Sunken County faces challenges in terms of accessibility as it is a remote and cold location. This situation poses certain security risks. When traveling to Sunken County, tourists typically opt to drive themselves, navigating through forests, frozen rivers, and thick snow. They arrive at the destination without complete guidance, facilities, and personnel. Moreover, the cold climate and inhospitable

environment place physical demands on travelers.

The popularity of Sunken County is relatively limited, resulting in tourists needing to become more familiar with the destination and its tourism characteristics, including its unique landscape features. The local government's lack of vigorous promotion also contributes to a lack of awareness among potential visitors, which means that many tourists need to be made aware of the existence of this tourist resort.

2.4.3. Opportunity analysis

With the end of the epidemic, travel has become a popular topic of discussion. From the sentiment "the world is so big, I want to see it" to the emerging concept of "revenge tourism" and "special forces tourism," people's enthusiasm for travel has only increased. Sunken County can use this opportunity to make a name and attract tourists eager to explore and spend.

The government strongly supports tourism development. The recent success of the "Zibo barbecue" trend led to a rapid growth in tourism in Zibo. Traveling to Zibo now offers a bustling experience, with many popular barbecue restaurants attracting visitors. Additionally, iconic spots such as the Zibo eight bureaus have become favorites among social media users for taking pictures. Sunken County can draw inspiration from the success of Zibo's tourism industry by creating a dedicated freezing fog tour route, promoting local specialties, and vigorously marketing the area's unique landscape.

2.4.4. Threat analysis

The impact of food and landmarks driving tourism is evident from the numerous successful cases found worldwide. These destinations have effectively leveraged their local gastronomy or iconic attractions to attract tourists from around the globe. However, the tourism industry is currently saturated, leading to overcrowded tourist spots and intense competition among cities targeting tourists. This saturation has decreased the market tolerance for new offerings, making it challenging for destinations to establish themselves. To stand out, destinations should focus on offering unique and immersive experiences, such as interactive culinary workshops or guided tours that unveil the hidden stories behind iconic landmarks. Destinations can differentiate themselves and entice discerning tourists by promoting sustainability and preserving cultural heritage.

3. Marketing strategies incorporating the Internet

3.1. Product Strategy

Sunken County features a diverse range of topographic characteristics, including four types of terrain: ice-eroded, volcanic lava flow, eroded accretionary, and accretionary. In terms of online operations, the objective is to showcase the County's picturesque landscapes and provide viewers with geographic knowledge. This dual approach allows viewers to appreciate the scenery while gaining knowledge, achieving the goal of education.

The low level of development in Sunken County is accompanied by inadequate infrastructure. Consequently, it is important to emphasize in promotional efforts that the destination is more suitable for experienced travelers accustomed to challenging environments. The publicity should focus on presenting factual information and highlighting the freedom to explore and experience the local surroundings. Improving necessary accommodations, pricing, and other facilities is necessary to ensure that false information is not used to attract tourists.[3]

3.2. Channel strategy

Understanding each platform's tone is a prerequisite to effectively promoting Sunken County using short video platforms. AAuto Quicker, a product of the sinking market, attracts many Northeastern creators, fostering an audience with an implicit affinity for Northeastern culture. By initially choosing AAuto Quicker as the platform, video creation difficulty remains relatively low, enabling quick exposure and drawing the first wave of traffic to Sunken County.

However, cross-platform creation and collaboration should be considered to convert this traffic into tangible benefits. With its more extensive user base and more substantial spending power among its mainstream audience (35% of users in first-tier and new first-tier cities), TikTok provides an opportunity for further engagement.

TikTok also boasts a significantly more significant number of creators. To break through on this

platform, leveraging the existing traffic from the AAuto Quicker platform and paying attention to video quality is necessary. A more detailed exploration of Sunken County's landscape characteristics will help differentiate the content and showcase its unique superiority.

3.3. Price strategy

In a downturned economy, lower pricing can attract users initially. Using a lottery model at the beginning of the project is essential, allowing tourists to experience Sunken County at a low or even zero cost. Maintaining low prices while upholding high-quality services is necessary to ensure a continuous influx of tourists.

As the project progresses and services are upgraded, prices can be appropriately raised to ensure profitability. However, it is crucial to take your time with this process. Initially, the focus should be on establishing the project and prioritizing the overall visitor experience without being overly concerned about immediate financial gains. The return on investment can be realized later once the project has gained momentum and a positive reputation.

3.4. Communication strategy

Cultural revitalization plays a crucial role in rural revitalization strategies and effectively enriches the spiritual and cultural needs of farmers. Meanwhile, tourism and culture are low-investment and high-return industries that can effectively revitalize rural areas through economic growth. With the support of favorable policies for the tourism industry, short video platforms have also shown an inclination to support content related to rural areas.

In promoting rural revitalization, it is advantageous to capitalize on policy incentives, reduce publicity costs, and leverage the support provided by short video platforms. TikTok, in particular, offers a comprehensive rural traffic support program. The promotion of videos can be achieved by using the platform's existing traffic and strategically investing in paid traffic placements. This approach ensures more comprehensive outreach and increased exposure for rural revitalization efforts, ultimately contributing to the success of these initiatives.

4. Tourism Development Project Risks and Countermeasures

4.1. Project risks

With the continuous development of the economy, people's demand for the tourism environment and the quality of tourism have been increasing. Although Sunken County boasts excellent natural scenery and its own unique ethnic culture, its infrastructure is incomplete, and its remote geographic location limits access to self-driving, which poses certain dangers. Accommodation, transportation, amusement, shopping, and other entertainment venues have yet to satisfy tourists' desires and require substantial development and construction. As a result, it lacks appeal for travelers seeking a sophisticated consumer experience.

Furthermore, the development and construction of various tourist facilities and commercial projects in the local area will inevitably cause some damage to the local ecological environment, thereby affecting the daily lives of local residents. Once completed, these projects will attract a large number of tourists, inevitably leading to alterations in the local landscape and waste pollution.

Finally, the freezing fog landscape is heavily influenced by seasonal factors. During the four-month period when the fog forms, tourists are bound to flock to the area. However, excluding these four or five months, the number of tourists in Sunken County without freezing fog is expected to be very low. Additionally, being located in Heihe City, Heilongjiang Province, near the Russian borderline, the extremely cold temperatures might deter some tourists who consider the climate too harsh for a visit.

4.2. Prescription

4.2.1. Vigorously building and developing local tourist attractions to meet people's consumption needs

Firstly, to address the issue of inconvenient tourist transportation, the government should establish a dedicated tourist line from the Heihe City Transportation Hub directly to Sunken County. Along this route, they can set up public facilities that showcase local and national characteristics and create stop-

and-change platforms. Furthermore, improving transportation equipment and installing directional road signs within Sunken County would enhance travel convenience.

Secondly, there should be improvements in local food and lodging options. The government should establish unique restaurant stalls that offer local cuisine, designate separate camping and picnic spots, process and sell freshly caught game, and construct hotels and lodges that reflect the local culture. It is also essential to control the upper limit of food and lodging prices to ensure affordability.

In addition, constructing integrated superstores to meet the demand for local specialties and crafts would significantly enhance the shopping experience for tourists. These stores could offer a wide range of products, allowing people to explore and purchase local items.

Lastly, strengthening the introduction of local tourism service workers would create many job opportunities. This includes roles in catering, transportation, accommodation, guiding, cleaning, and commerce. Furthermore, the government should focus on constructing ornamental projects such as amusement parks, ice sculpture parks, float exhibitions, and bonfire parties. These activities and projects should highlight the local ethnic characteristics and provide opportunities for the sale of ethnic portraits, clothing, and utensils.[4]

4.2.2. Strengthening environmental governance and ecological protection

To address the issue of man-made environmental pollution and damage resulting from the increased number of tourists in scenic spots, it is essential to educate and encourage tourists to minimize garbage production. Additionally, deploying manpower to manage waste disposal and sewage discharge in these scenic spots would be beneficial.

For the damage caused to the freezing fog landscape due to the influx of tourists, it is important to implement measures to control the number of tourists allowed into the area at a given time. By dividing the area into protected zones and implementing timely maintenance and treatment measures, it is possible to preserve the landscape as much as possible. The goal should be to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the freezing fog landscape.

4.2.3. Utilizing the Internet for online and offline linkages to increase tourism promotion

Indeed, with the rapid development of the internet, Sunken County's tourism reputation has yet to be fully recognized, resulting in limited awareness among potential tourists. To address this, it is crucial to leverage the power of online platforms to promote the unique tourism characteristics of Sunken County.

One practical approach is establishing official social media accounts highlighting local tourism offerings. These accounts can actively engage with users, posting captivating content featuring the natural beauty and cultural aspects of Sunken County. Inviting famous online personalities, such as prominent travel bloggers and influencers, to visit Sunken County for tourism experiences can generate more exposure and attract a wider audience.

Collaborating with local government and media organizations, sponsoring TV and online programs, and setting Sunken County as a filming location for variety shows and TV movies on major platforms will also contribute to its popularity. With such online momentum, Sunken County will undoubtedly experience a significant increase in visibility, ultimately attracting more tourists to explore its offerings.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study delves into an extensive analysis of travel preferences and trends, thoroughly examining their strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities specifically for Sunken County. Additionally, it provides a comprehensive set of marketing approaches and risk response strategies that factor in the local conditions. The study underscores the significance of striking a balance between project opportunities and risks while developing cultural and tourism facilities with distinctive characteristics. Adequate public opinion monitoring and dedication to providing excellent after-sales service are crucial in effectively managing risks and transforming unfavorable situations into favorable outcomes. Implementing these strategies will help Sunken County establish a thriving cultural tourism industry while ensuring positive visitor experiences.

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